

VILLAGE GROUPS – ANNUAL REPORTS TO ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2013



**Staplehurst** for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> March 2013 has shown a **16.2%** reduction in crime based on the previous year. Within these figures shed and outbuilding breaks showed a **50%** reduction on the year. We are very pleased with these figures which have been achieved through the support/ information that we receive from the community and the other agencies we work with. We have dealt with a number of issues throughout the year, which have included the following:

- Several arrests and convictions throughout the year for burglaries and shed breaks.
- Follow ups on the victims of burglaries/breaks to give crime prevention advice and information booklets.
- Visits/talks and meetings with the staff at Woodlands House to discuss and advise on issues relating to the facility.
- Verge parking within the village. Along with councillors and other agencies we have managed to get bollards installed in Poyntell Road. Local residents were very pleased with this outcome.
- Speed enforcement checks and speed monitoring checks throughout the village.
- Talks throughout the year to various local groups. Beavers/Playgroups/school etc.
- Patrols of outlying areas to deter and stop vehicles known for scrap metal thefts. This has been backed up with pre-arranged Policing Operations County wide involving numerous authorities and scrap yard inspections.
- There have been motorbike / scooter seizures and warning notices issued to youths riding their bikes off road. CCTV cameras also assisted with this.

We are continuing to work around the issues of young people drinking alcohol and causing a nuisance around the village. This has not been a major issue this year and any incidents of this type of behaviour have been swiftly dealt with to good effect.

The three CCTV cameras have been used on numerous occasions to assist us with our enquiries. Recently I was able to identify a youth in Market Street that had stolen a ladder in the area.

Police surgeries have now been arranged for the remainder of the year at the library and you are all welcome to attend and raise any concerns you have. Details and dates can be found on the Parish website and on the library poster wall.

Anyone wishing to contact me can call the non-emergency Police number 101. Thank you for your continued support in making Staplehurst safe.

PCSO Pete Gardner - Team 5 - Maidstone Neighbourhood Team

**FRIENDS OF STAPLEHURST HEALTH CENTRE** - The Friends' remit is to support the Health Centre in its work to relieve sickness and preserve health among those living in Staplehurst, Frittenden and the surrounding areas, whether permanently or temporarily. We do this by providing assistance, facilities, equipment or support to the Health Centre staff; by providing health education with public talks and our newsletters. All residents or visitors to the Health Centre are welcome to become members and membership is free.

It has been a difficult year for the administration and management of the health centre as the Primary Care Trust insisted that the management contract was to be re-tendered rather than giving the present incumbents an extension of contract. Given the current upheaval in the NHS, the latter course of action might have proved better as the re-tendering process has proved to be protracted and this has resulted in uncertainty for the staff. Some have decided to seek other posts and have left; this has resulted in lack of continuity of doctors. Until such time as the successors to the PCT award the new management contract, it will prove difficult to advertise for, and recruit replacement staff.

In the past year, we have produced 4 newsletters and helped to distribute them with the Parish Council's Village Update. We have held information evenings on Breast and Urological Cancers and their treatments, and on Eye Conditions, and these were all well attended.

Members of the Friends also helped out with the administration during the usual autumn flu jab marathon and ran an information table on National No Smoking Day where patients could obtain information on smoking cessation treatment.

As usual our main source of funding came from the sale of tickets for the Christmas draw, but we also benefitted from some donations.

The Friends has been established as a registered charity for nearly 6 years and it continues to perform a valuable role in the provision of health information within the community. Further information can be obtained from the Secretary, Robin Oakley on 01580 891516.

**ROYAL BRITISH LEGION** – We are a Sub Branch of Goudhurst Branch of The Royal British Legion due to our shortage of members. However, we do show our faces from time to time.

We were in attendance at the Airfield Memorial Service on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2012. We organised the Annual Remembrance Day Parade on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2012, with the help of the Parish Council and non-RBL 'volunteers' who closed the High Street. We also organised the Annual Poppy Appeal, with the help of our loyal band of collectors, businesses etc. Our most recent effort was to assist the Parish Council with the Sgt Fitzgerald Remembrance Service on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2013.

There are changes afoot for 2013. The post of Poppy Appeal organiser is being taken over by Miss Jenny Richford, who is not a member of the RBL. We still hope to organise the Annual Remembrance Day Parade.

Vic Holdaway - President

**STAPLEHURST CALENDAR** - Sales of the 2013 Calendar have now been completed. Thanks to our loyal sponsors the printing costs have been covered again this year for the ninth edition. I would also like to thank The Hop Press Printing of Marden for their continued support.

A total of 358 copies were sold at various events during the Christmas period and also through outlets in the village, special thanks are due to Staplehurst Post Office, Martins Newsagents and Henhurst Farm Shop.

Proceeds from the sales of £1,530.00 were divided between the Staplehurst Scout Group and Staplehurst District Guides, each receiving a cheque for £765.00 at a presentation in the Scout Centre on Wednesday January 23rd.

Total money raised for Staplehurst organisations over the past nine years now stands at £12,845.27. Thank you all for your support, we now look forward to the 10th edition.

Ken Collins

**STAPLEHURST CRICKET & TENNIS CLUB** - With around 450 members, Staplehurst Cricket & Tennis Club is probably the largest community organisation in Staplehurst. As a registered Community Amateur Sports Club, we are committed to building community partnerships and access for all regardless of background or ability.

Our biggest success story in recent years has been the development of our youth programmes. Over 50% of our members are under the age of 20, encouraged by the extensive provision of cricket and tennis coaching for all ages and abilities as well as competitive junior sport. At the end of 2012 we were re-accredited with England & Wales Cricket Board Clubmark in recognition of excellence in our overall management but particularly around youth development. We are also a Kent Cricket Board Focus Club. In December, we featured as a case study in a national cricket magazine.

In partnership with South-Eastern Tennis, junior and adult coaching for ages 3 to 93 is on Monday and Friday evenings and every weekend. Holiday tennis courses, for beginners through to champions, will take place over the summer. Our Open Day and Tennis Circus, with the chance to watch and play with top professionals, is on Bank Holiday Monday, May 6. Adult social tennis and group coaching is on Friday nights from 8.00pm.

Registration for junior cricketers – girls and boys of all abilities aged 5-16 - is on Sunday May 5, 10-12 noon, with the 2 hour Sunday morning training sessions starting the following week along with a full fixture list at U9, U11, U13 and U15. We also run a joint district team at U17 which in 2012 was very successful with one of our 16-year olds, Tom Henson, scoring three hundreds in four innings.

We hope, ultimately, that our young cricketers progress into the adult teams where we play at a range of levels from Division 1 of the Invicta League to a more social Sunday friendly basis. Both our Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> XI were still competing for league titles on the final day of the 2012 league season and the Sunday Village League XI, with at least seven under-18s in the team for every game, were promoted for the second successive year.

The Club operates year round with winter tennis coaching, indoor cricket training, a floodlit junior cricket tournament, and an active social programme. The Clubhouse bar is open on

Friday evenings and Sunday lunchtimes and, in the summer, all day Saturday and Sunday and mid-week evenings when cricket is played. Our popular monthly quiz night is on the last Thursday of each month and there are a number of major social events through the summer including live music nights and our annual barbecue.

Full details of all our activities can be found on our website at [www.staplehurstcricket.com](http://www.staplehurstcricket.com) and [www.staplehursttennis.com](http://www.staplehursttennis.com) or just drop into the Club when we are open.

**STAPLEHURST EMERGENCY HELP TEAM (SEHT)** - This year the SEHT volunteers continued to hone their skills by taking part in an emergency exercise at the station. We planned and carried it out without any external help, very successfully. The fully operational team is part of the Kent and Maidstone area emergency teams, for both Maidstone Borough Council and KCC and has done some official training. New volunteers are always welcome – please contact the Parish Office in the first instance.

**STAPLEHURST FOOTPATH GROUP** - Staplehurst Footpath Group celebrated its 36<sup>th</sup> year of existence by achieving a full programme of 13 walks during 2012-2013. Six of these walks were local, commencing and completing in the village, whilst the remainder were further afield in Kent and Sussex.

Our February walk took us out to Marden Thorn, returning via Snoad Lane and Brattle Farm. A well-attended walk in March covered a circuitous route to Marden through Clapper Farm Lane and back via Wanshurst Green. A small, dedicated group managed our April walk, along part of the North Downs Way, at Wye. A "Blossom Walk" was undertaken in May, through sunny orchards around Yalding.

To celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June, we undertook a 60 furlong walk encompassing the southern half of the parish of Staplehurst, including Paley Farm, Knoxbridge, Great Wadd and Maplehurst. We enjoyed a lunch break at the newly opened Garden Centre Café. June also saw us complete the "Longest Day" evening walk, out to Frittenden and back, via the Bell and Jorrocks!

On a sunny July afternoon we walked from Bodiam to Salehurst, via the ruined Robertsbridge Abbey, returning back along the banks of the Rother. Paddock Wood was the location of our August walk where we covered a section of the Medway Valley Walk, returning through fields close to the Hop Farm Festival venue. September's walk was a figure of eight configured around the pretty village of Egerton. We enjoyed far reaching southerly views on a lovely sunny afternoon. A walk from East Malling Church, through orchards and woodland, with views over the North Downs was completed in October.

A local walk in November sunshine, took us out to Broadlake via Maplehurst, returning through the WW2 airfield at Chickenden and across the golf course. Our Christmas walk was also local and took the route across the fields out to Hawkenbury Bridge returning via Turley Farm and Pile Lane, for a glass of mulled wine and some mince pies! Our final walk for the period was our New Year Walk which saw 25 members complete an interesting walk from Sutton Valence with great views from the Greensand Ridge out across the Weald.

Monthly walks are at the core of the group's activities and these are held on the second Sunday of each month commencing at 2pm. We also contribute to the maintenance of the local footpath network, giving the public access to the local countryside around Staplehurst.

Non- members are welcome to join our walks, Membership costs just £1 per family per year, or you can purchase sets of our Local Walk Cards, obtainable from Staplehurst Library.

M. Gillam, Secretary

**STAPLEHURST FREE CHURCH** - This has been a most exciting and encouraging year for us as a church. Having had a number of delays on the building front we were able to move into our new building on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2012. The building inspector came on the 19<sup>th</sup> December and passed the downstairs for public use. Because of shortage of funds at the time we were unable to complete the upstairs but now thankfully the builders are back in and we hope this aspect of the building will be in use soon. It is our desire to see the building completed and open for inspection by the whole community for our official open day scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

We are so grateful to God for enabling us to come this far with the provision of finance in excess of £1,000,000 to date. For as a congregation it is thrilling to see a long awaited vision (first discussed by the church back in 2005) become a reality and to have so many in the community encouraging us along in this project as it has been taking shape.

From those early days in March 2011 when we held our groundbreaking ceremony, we have seen the building slowly advancing with the roof being completed in January 2012. The first phase of the building, to complete a watertight shell, was passed early in that year and we were able to seamlessly pass on to phase two, completing the inside downstairs for public use.

We are thankful to the governors, Headmistress and staff at **Staplehurst Primary School** for their willingness in granting access to their hall for our morning services from September 2007 until December 2012. What an amazing provision this venue and others have been since our old building was demolished.

We also are grateful to the **URC** for the use of their premises on Sunday evenings for our services, mid-week business meetings, and our church youth club held in the **URC** schoolroom on Tuesday evenings. The youth are now being led by themselves and other adult leaders from our congregation in our new premises.

Our **Toddlers club**, still a helpful resource to many parents, carers and children in the community met every Thursday morning in the village hall up till July 2012, but then had a break until this January when they were able to function once more out of our new building. Working together with our fellow churches in the village we are delighted the **Debt Advice Centre** based in the Village Centre continues to help a variety of families in this village and the locality.

A project between the four churches of Staplehurst has been "**Teamspirit**" a committee formed from members of our village church communities who have worked together preparing and planning for a series of events held in our village with a sporting theme. In this last year when we held the Olympics in London, we invited a number of Christian sporting personalities to come and share how their Christian faith affected their everyday lives.

**STAPLEHURST GIRL GUIDES** - Staplehurst District Guides has had a very busy year in all the sections of guiding: Rainbows (for girls aged 5-7 year), Brownies (for girls aged 7-10), Guides (for girls aged 10-14), Rangers (for girls aged 14-25). Activities have been varied and have ranged from a fabulous afternoon of Guiding's Got Talent held back in February as a celebration of World Thinking Day, when units performed their own sketches, songs and displays in front of a panel of 4 judges. There was also a joint campfire with Staplehurst Scouts for our Jubilee Celebration. Within the units there has been plenty of craft activities, visits to London, outdoor activity weekends, camps, pack holidays, sleepovers, going to the Panto, water activities – and this is just a few of the things that the girls have taken part in whilst in Guiding! There are opportunities to take part in something that girls may not have had a chance to do before and to learn about themselves, the community and the world around them, and yet to do this in an enjoyable and fun way.

Interest in all the levels of Guiding is high and there are always girls on unit waiting lists – especially for the younger girls wanting to join Rainbows and Brownies. At present there is only one Rainbow unit in Staplehurst, 4 Brownie Units (one of which is based in Marden but is still part of our District), 2 Guide units and one Ranger/Senior Section unit. None of these units would be able to continue if it wasn't for the hard work of the all the volunteers who are the Leaders for these units. It is to them that thanks must go for keeping the spirit of Guiding alive and active in both Staplehurst and Marden.

Volunteers are always needed and will be welcomed into the guiding family. So whether you are an adult or younger then please have a look at the website for further information ([www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk)). If you want to join a unit or to volunteer then please register your interest at [www.girlguiding.org.uk/interested](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/interested).

**STAPLEHURST INTEREST GROUP** - Having reached our tenth birthday the group continues to welcome new as well as regular members. Meeting each Thursday morning in the United Reformed Schoolroom we are un-affiliated to any organisation, just being a group of friends who enjoy each others' company. We plan to cater for a wide-range of tastes, providing stimulating talks, activities and visits, but most of all have the opportunity to support each other with practical help and good humour.

Joan and Malcolm Buller

**STAPLEHURST SCOUT GROUP** - Staplehurst Scout group continues to thrive with over 100 boys and girls attending between the ages of 6 and 15. In the last year we have undertaken many badge skills such as outdoor cooking (not on a BBQ!) animal caring and personal safety. All children learn about first aid, caring for the environment and of course, the major benefit of scouting, teamwork. We have had lots of activities as well such as camping, hiking, tramping, outdoor survival, climbing, and our favourite - map reading and still getting lost!

We are completely self-reliant and raise all our funds from subs, fund raising and kind donations from supporters in the community. We receive no subsidies or hand-outs and are therefore very grateful to supporters such as Kim Pullen Estate Agents, Kumho Tyres and Staplehurst Tyres, Ken Collins for the Christmas Calendars, and parents for their generous financial support. We have undertaken other fund raising activities such as the Christmas Post service, catering for the model railway exhibition and sleeping out rough in cardboard boxes. This raised vital funds for the Scouts but also allowed us to make donations to Porchlight (the Children' Homeless Charity), Buttercups animal sanctuary and to other local causes.

Unfortunately we have had to temporarily close one of our Beaver colonies due to lack of leaders. Adult volunteers and helpers are desperately needed to keep scouting thriving in the village. If you are interested in getting involved please get in touch. All the details are on our website [www.staplehurstscoutgroup.org.uk](http://www.staplehurstscoutgroup.org.uk) or call Bill Best on 07956 308115.

Bill Best  
Chair, Staplehurst Scout Group.

**STAPLEHURST SOCIETY** - The year began with a number of significant changes to the committee membership, including the election of Mike Pounds- Longhurst as Chairman, Alan Baum as Secretary, Margaret Arger as Treasurer and Jenny Fairfax as Minute Secretary. New to the committee also are Maureen Brice and Andrew Wilson.

The Society remains committed to making a contribution to village life on a number of levels. Our role as keeper of the village historical archive continues with regular contributions from Anita Thompson to the Parish Magazine, weekly meetings of the history group at the Village Centre, and presentation of archive material through exhibitions and through our website. We have held a number of successful social events including talks on walking to Everest base camp by Graham Billin and policing royal visits to Kent by Colin Breed. In November we enjoyed helping run the annual model railway exhibition. We made two visits to the new Free Church, before and after Christmas. A wine tasting hosted by Murcatto Wines was held in November at Sobell Lodge, and we will be visiting Hush Heath vineyard and winery on May 1st. Our members responded to environmental issues such as the Countryside Partnership survey of wildlife meadows, and we continue to take an active interest in issues such as new housing developments and the location of new amenities such as cafes, restaurants, supermarkets and shops.

We currently have 175 members, some 12 or so having recently joined. We would like to have more, and we will be seeking to augment our numbers through the promotion of our restructured website at [www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/staplehurstsociety/](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/staplehurstsociety/) (now kindly run for us by Jonathan Mardel) and through our stand at the forthcoming village Carnival in June.

We issue regular newsletters and encourage members to raise issues of concern to them personally, as well as issues which they believe the society should have views on. The committee meets on the last Wednesday of each month and we encourage members to place items on the agenda by contacting the secretary in advance of the meeting. Our AGM is being held at the United Reform Church at 8pm on Wednesday 29 May. Please come along and find out more.

**"Ps'arms Puppets"** our church puppet ministry team continues to take assemblies in about 17 schools each term in the Maidstone area, although they have taken a break this term hoping to resume after Easter.

Being a church with a heart to serve our community we are glad to be involved in a variety of ways encouraging one another in the caring role that helps us all feel as though we belong.

Respectfully submitted by Clive Jones (Pastor) February 2013.

**THE BRIGHT AND BREEZY GROUP** - The group, formally known as Breathe Easy, gives support for people living with respiratory conditions and includes their carers, family and friends who are all invited to join us at our monthly meetings to listen to a variety of guest speakers, enjoy some social interaction, light refreshments and perhaps win a prize in the raffle.

Due to uncertainties about a meeting venue continuing at the Health Centre following its possible take-over by administrators other than Malling Health following the completion of the PCT tendering process at the end of March, meetings are now taking place at the McCabe Centre, Bell Lane, Staplehurst. They are now on the second Wednesday of each calendar month, starting at 2pm.

For more information contact John Whitford on 01580 893210 or Mike Byrne on 01580 891392.

**THE FRIENDS OF POYNTELL POND** - We continue to run our rota of helpers and hold clear-up mornings to help keep the pond and surrounding area tidy. We are extra-vigilant since great-crested newts were spotted in the pond last year. Water levels have returned to higher levels following the winter rains and our spring bulbs are now adding colour to the waterside. For further information please contact Mick Westwood on 01580 892726.

**THE QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS 2012** - Despite the atrocious weather conditions that prevailed throughout the four day celebrations, the British stiff upper lip shone through to make the occasion a memorable one.

A tree was planted by the Horticultural Society and primary school children in the school grounds and a vintage bus tour of hidden gems around the village proved a huge success.

The highlight of the celebrations was the tribute bands playing in the rain on the last evening accompanied by fireworks to round off Staplehurst's contribution to the nation's tribute.

**WEALD CLUB FOR THE DISABLED** - The club meets weekly on Fridays at the McCabe Centre, Staplehurst between 10am and 2pm. A cooked lunch is provided.

Activities include Bingo and Boccia (a type of bowls played sitting down). Dance groups come to the centre to entertain and there are trips during the Spring and Summer to various places such as garden centres and the coast. At Christmas there is a shopping trip to Maidstone and a Christmas lunch at a local venue.

Our minibus is available to pick up people from the local areas such as Staplehurst, Marden and Sutton Valence.

All our volunteer helpers are willing and helpful and our escort staff are CRB checked. Anyone interested in coming along or becoming a volunteer should contact either Diane on 01622 851387 or Maggie on 01580 891870.